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## WORKSHOP METHODS OF SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

**Abstract.** This paper summarises two selected workshop methods of public space programming and design. Proper application of those methods allows to attain full social participation, to facilitate the decision-making process, as well as to resolve potential conflicts with building of confidence in democratic procedures and institutions.

**Keywords:** public space, participation, workshop, Place making, Charrette.

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## ПРАКТИЧЕСКИЕ МЕТОДЫ ПРОЕКТИРОВАНИЯ УСТОЙЧИВОГО ОБЩЕСТВЕННОГО ПРОСТРАНСТВА

**Аннотация.** В данной статье кратко описываются два выбранных метода программирования и проектирования общественного пространства. Правильное применение этих методов позволяет достичь полного участия в жизни общества, содействовать процессу принятия решений, а также разрешать потенциальные конфликты с укреплением доверия в демократических процедурах и институтах.

**Ключевые слова:** общественное пространство, участие, мастерская, Шаретт.

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### Introduction

Public space is a priceless environment for human interaction, communication, retail, and information exchange; it is a space for culture and a medium for symbolic content. Good public space is fundamental for a sense of community and thus an indispensable component of sustainable urban structures.

Proper functioning of public space is a challenge for all residents. However, they often share a feeling that the street, square, park, or even semi-private yard of the house they live is a space that belongs to nobody. Consequently, they need to develop an awareness of joint ownership and responsibility. People who feel that they are in charge start to care for their environment. Only residents can impose upon themselves and other community members those indispensable restrictions that serve the attainment of spatial order. Although, real public participation does not just exist in the consultation of completed designs, or the selection of one of limited ready-made options, but rather requires the involvement of stakeholders in the development of vision and operating programmes at the very beginning of the planning or design processes.

### Participation: Workshop Methods

The roles of the planner and the architect are changing: they are shifting from the positions of leaders

and artists who impose their visions to the roles of advisers and experts who offer their services to space users. Workshop methods are useful in such a shift. The flow of knowledge on the nature, identity and problems of particular places and the clash of diverse opinions, behaviours and motivations that occur during a workshop change the urbanist's perspective from subjective, external and aesthetic to rather objective and accounting for complex place contexts: historical, social, cultural and psychological.

The work of the architect and urban planner always required decisions of psychological and social nature [1]. The development of workshop design methods is a practical consequence of a large interest in various trends of environmental psychology and appreciation of surveys (especially qualitative ones). Those methods are intended to work out consensus or at least compromise in conflict situations. A fundamental problem is efficient organization and selection of representative partners, with establishment of good communication between professionals and the community [2]. Local grass root initiatives based on voluntary work and led by NGOs help in that approach. In addition to space quality and economic vitality improvement, the purpose of workshops is to integrate local communities.

One of the most important organisations that disseminate workshop methods of public space

programming and design is the Project for Public Spaces, a non-profit organisation established in 1975, which set itself a goal to assist local communities with regaining spaces degraded and dominated by cars, as well as creation and strengthening of public and semi-public spaces.

PPS's activities are based on the methods of observation and evaluation of space dynamics, described, for example, by W.H. Whyte, J. Jacobs and J. Gehl. Owing to the integration of theory with dozens of years of practical experience, PPS developed a unique approach to complex public space problems: a set of patterns and effective evaluation methods was developed to assist in understanding urban space functioning and potential place value. The PPS method helps various stakeholders to determine and express their aspirations, needs and priorities. Participation appears at the stage of developing initial visions. Experts play there a supporting role. Solutions result from deep local knowledge and multi-aspect place evaluation. A common vision attracts partners, resources and new initiatives. Actions become dynamic based on previous small successes. The changes are based on continuous appraisal and improvements. Involvement increases together with the feeling of social control and ownership.

PPS has helped for example in the revitalization of important places in New York: Rockefeller Center, Bryant Park, Battery Park, Fifth Avenue, Times Square, and World Trade Center Public Space; in Washington: Capitol area, Washington Monument and Washington Metro, as well as in many other places in the United States, for example, Victoria Gardens (Seattle), Campus Martius (Detroit), and Hollywood Boulevard (Los Angeles).

PPS also assists international partners in fast and affordable improvement of poorly functioning public spaces, releasing social energy that is indispensable for continuous and productive space operation. The PPS method consists in creating local partnerships that are responsible for day-to-day management, facility improvement and maintenance of public space. Local government and administration obtain support from private entities interested in high space standards in their surroundings.

The PPS leaders, similarly to Cooper-Marcus and Francis [3], convince us that semi-public spaces are also more and more important. They are associated with various public facilities such as offices, schools, libraries, hospitals, administration buildings or social welfare houses, which serve specific groups of users with particular needs and expectations. The people who are tired of the fast rate of life, especially in large heterogeneous urban areas, need a feeling of safety and predictability that may be found in such enclaves.

The application of the PPS methods also helps in creation of semi-private courtyards and backyards that, although remaining open to the outsiders, are mainly

used by the local residents. The feeling of belonging shaped in such places by the spatial form, and the division between the private and public domains, despite the lack of physical barriers preventing access, remain clear. Thus, the interiors of urban blocks constitute ideal environment for the development of the sense of community and they are informally overlooked places of recreation, play and inter-generational integration.

In Poland, the Polish Environmental Partnership and the International Centre of Education of the Cracow University of Technology disseminate the PPS method. Owing to our co-operation, a Polish version of the basic PPS manual *How to Turn a Place Around* [4] was prepared and published. The book describes tools of analysis, dialogue, observation, evaluation and organization of public space revitalisation processes. From 2008 to 2009, a series of lectures and workshops was conducted for communities across Poland, interested in the subject.

### Charrette

Another method of involving various stakeholders in the urban design process is the workshops called Charrette (in the United Kingdom also known as the Enquiry by Design). They consist of intense, four-to-six day long sessions, during which representatives of the local government, scholars, developers, residents and other stakeholders join the architects, urbanists and planners to develop programmes and create and verify the conceptions that lead to a complete urban design vision. Such workshops are preceded by proper substantive preparation. The participants have a real influence on the conceptual design assumptions, and they obtain a feeling of joint decision making which increases their involvement in later implementation processes. The workshops are forms of direct democracy, as well as effective tools of sustainable urbanism, helping to order development priorities and increase space value.

Since the 1980's, Charrettes are more and more often applied in the United States and other countries for development of revitalization programmes, public space revival, reurbanisation of large-scale modernist estates and transportation routes, as well as planning of new districts and towns.

### Case Study: Nowy Siewierz

The Charrette method was applied to prepare the design of the Nowy Siewierz eco-town in Silesian Voivodeship. This compact urban structure, on the one hand assures good access to urban infrastructure, proximity of services and other business activities that are characteristic for a town, and on the other hand offers contact with nature, privacy and a sense of the small-town community.

The Mycielski Architecture & Urbanism (MAU) studio prepared and organized the workshop. During a several-day long Charrette held in October 2007, it was possible to define a vision of the new development, as

well as to start or strengthen co-operation between the majority of persons and institutions that were important for the success of such a complex project.

The spatial conception created by an international group of urbanists, with an essential participation of local stakeholders, provides the construction of a compact town, with services, offices, hotels, a jetty, a local water collector and a waste treatment plant (Fig. 1). Several residential units are concentrated around town squares. The space is to be dominated by the church constructed on the highest elevation. In the central area, a park has been designed, with a network of ponds and pools. A recreational boulevard, with a hotel, a conference complex, a pension and a jetty, will be constructed along the water front. National Road no. 1 will be developed with industrial and office buildings. Their curtain arrangement will protect residential and service space against heavy traffic.

The project implementation will take many years and several stages. In the future, 7,000 persons may live on the area of 120 ha. The first phase will occupy 44 ha, with 1,000 flats and houses, and ca. 60–90,000 m<sup>2</sup> of office, hotel and commercial space.

The architectural code prepared by the DPZ Europe will serve to utilize the pro-environmental project assumptions. The New Broad Street Companies (Orlando) known for flag New Urbanism projects as Celebration and Baldwyn Park prepared the business plan.

Certain problems resulting from the lack of proper legal instruments or local experience in the attainment of similar projects have not been resolved yet. What is a challenge in the conditions of imperfect law is the accomplishment of the agreed architectural code. That will be decisive for the cohesion, compactness, harmony and multi-functionality of the development and the proper shape and furnishing of public spaces. The code is meant to guarantee, for example, the application of local, wholesome materials, harmony of colour and detail, ecological water and waste management, renewable energy supply and others.

In April 2010, MAU conducted another Charrette. The object of the workshop was the area of the Grodziec Cement Plant closed in 1979. Two different designs were prepared because of the Charrette arrangements. The sequences of diverse public and semi-public spaces, surrounded by buildings of various functions, are essential in both visions.

### Conclusions

In the free market and democracy conditions, all the environment-shaping disciplines require the improvement of methods and tools. Local stakeholders should have an actual influence on the shape of their environment. Only they can impose indispensable limitations serving attainment of spatial order. Architects cannot build only sustainable, useful and beautiful towns; it is rather a task for all the residents.



Fig. 1. The spatial conception created by an international group of urbanists



Workshop methods do not consist in the consultation of ready-made designs or selection of one option, but rather require the involvement of stakeholders in the determination of the idea, vision and action programmes at an early stage of the planning or design processes.

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